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DIRECTORATE OF
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Intelligence Memorandum

Warsaw Pact War Plan for Central Region of Europe

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
18 June 1968

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Warsaw Pact War Plan for Central Region of Europe

Summary

The Warsaw Pact contingency plan for war with NATO in the Central Region of Europe--as revised by the Soviets in the early 1960's--assigns the initial offensive missions to the forces already deployed in East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Poland. In addition, it gives both the Czechs and Poles command over their own national forces. After the initial objectives have been gained, Soviet forces in the western USSR would move quickly into the Central Region and take over the offensive against NATO. (See foldout map at end.)

Under the previous plan, the initial offensive would have been conducted mainly by Soviet forces, including those based in the western USSR, with the East European forces integrated into Soviet-led Fronts. This concept, to be effective, required a high level of combat readiness for the Soviet forces in the western USSR. The reduction of Soviet ground force strength in the early 1960's probably made this plan infeasible and stimulated concurrent improvements in the East European ground forces to permit them to assume greater responsibilities.

Note: This memorandum was produced solely by CIA. It was prepared by the Office of Strategic Research and coordinated with the Offices of Current Intelligence and National Estimates.

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all participating forces--including those presently at low strength--are intended to be available in three days. The Soviet forces which would eventually take over the Czech sector are also scheduled to begin arriving in Czechoslovakia within three days. The ability of the Czechs to meet this timetable is uncertain, but in any case the initial combat effectiveness of the Czech army would be seriously degraded by the need for extensive mobilization.

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1. [redacted]

[redacted] has provided important new details about the Warsaw Pact war plan, supplementing earlier information [redacted] on pact exercises and from [redacted].

2. [redacted]

[redacted] relate to Czech participation. [redacted] tends to confirm previous judgments about the general outlines of these plans, but [redacted] has filled in many gaps--particularly in regard to the Czech role, which was only vaguely understood before.

3. [redacted] indicates that the Warsaw Pact war plan is based on the assumptions that war will begin with conventional weapons and that nuclear weapons will probably be necessary to effect a decision. The plan involves a rapid broad advance through West Germany and on to the English Channel. [redacted] there are no alternative plans involving Czech participation and [redacted] is aware of none for the other forces.

Composition of the Theater's Forces

4. In general terms, the main Warsaw Pact contingency plan for the advance past the Rhine River posits a force of five Fronts (army groups) in two echelons.* The primary offensive missions are as-

* The term "echelon" has special meaning in the Soviet view of military operations. Soviet doctrine envisages large groupings of troops deployed behind the front-line or first-echelon units and not engaged in combat with the enemy. This second echelon would be committed only after the first-echelon forces have been substantially engaged by the enemy. In some sense the second echelon is a reserve, but it is a maneuvering force, often with predetermined objectives. The Soviet concept of echelons is applicable at all levels, including the theater level.

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signed to Warsaw Pact forces (the first echelon) presently deployed in the forward area: in East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Poland.

5. [redacted] suggests that a Polish front is planned for a thrust along the seaward flank, a force composed of both Soviet and East German forces in East Germany is assigned the Front role in the central sector, and the Czechs would provide a Front on the southern flank. [redacted] the second echelon in the Czech sector is a Soviet Front from the Carpathian region of the Ukraine. The Soviet forces in Belorussia appear to be designed to perform similarly to the Carpathian force but behind the Soviet- or Polish-led Fronts to the north, although there is no direct evidence as such.

Command and Control

6. Overall planning and coordination responsibilities are theoretically borne by the Warsaw Pact commander and the pact staff but are actually carried out by the Soviet General Staff for the force as a whole. The Czechs and Poles exercise control only of the Fronts consisting mainly of their own national forces. The East Germans apparently have even less authority.

7. The Soviets apparently do not engage in joint planning when only Soviet troops are involved. For example, the Czechs seem to have been provided little information on the size of the Soviet forces slated to move into Czechoslovakia and the demands which would be placed on the Czech rail and highway systems. Such lack of coordinated planning seems likely to result in severe difficulties for the pact in meeting the tight movement schedules postulated in the plan.

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Missions of the Fronts

10. The Czechs have been given the responsibility of advancing as far as the west bank of the Rhine in the area roughly between Mannheim and the Swiss border (see map). [] that the Czech Front designed for this mission is composed of three combined-arms armies, one tactical air army, and assorted Front combat and service support units.

11. Included in the combined-arms armies are a total of six tank and six motorized rifle divisions. The tactical air army contains one fighter division and two fighter-bomber divisions. One combined-arms army of four divisions and the bulk of the Front support units are understrength in men and equipment and require extensive mobilization.

12. [] the Czech plan specifies that the men and equipment (trucks) for the army be mobilized within three days. The ability of the Czechs to meet this timetable is uncertain, but in any case the initial combat effectiveness of the Czech army would be seriously degraded by the need for extensive mobilization.

13. [] suggests that the Soviet Front from the Carpatho-Ukrainian area, which would provide the second echelon in the Czech zone, would be similar in size and composition to the Czech force. [] that the Soviet Front would follow the Czech Front by about three days and eventually assume the leading position. The concept of the operation calls for the Soviets to take over the advance from the Czechs near the Rhine. The Soviet Front would then push past the Rhine and, depending upon the political situation at that time, continue the advance through France.

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14. [REDACTED] of the Czech sector of the European theater of operations is generally consistent with other evidence on the subject. The order of battle in the Carpathian Military District is known to consist of three ground armies and a tactical air army which would operate as a Front in wartime. In a 1961 Warsaw Pact exercise, [REDACTED] the Carpathian Military District represented a Front, with elements of the military district headquarters and of all three ground armies actually deployed in Czechoslovakia.

15. This is the only known exercise in which the area of operations for Carpathian forces was well defined, although an exercise in 1966 also associated elements from Carpathia with Czech forces. A recent assessment, [REDACTED], suggests that the main tank army of the Carpathian Military District is ready for almost immediate commitment while the other two ground armies in the military district appear to require extensive mobilization similar to that required by the low-strength Czech army. [REDACTED] tends to [REDACTED] that the Soviet front from the Ukraine is similar in composition to the Czech force.

16. The large-scale exercises of the pact forces simulate the role of those forces in the Warsaw Pact war plan, [REDACTED]. The Soviet-East German Front, as reconstructed from exercise scenarios, apparently is tasked with the destruction of the main NATO forces in Germany deployed between Hannover on the north and Mannheim on the south. The Poles apparently intend to advance deep into NATO territory along the North Sea coast.

17. The Soviet-East German Front has seven armies, but two of them may be scheduled for eventual attachment to the Polish Front. The Polish Front has three Polish land armies with tactical air support. The role of the Soviet Northern Group of Forces in Poland--two divisions and a tactical air army--is unknown.

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18. Behind the Soviet-East German and Polish Fronts there is a possible second-echelon Front in the Belorussian Military District. [redacted] indicate that the district contains three armies similar in status to the three in the Carpathian Military District. While there is no direct evidence of the mission of the Belorussian armies, they are similar in many respects to the Carpathian armies and may have a like mission. If so, the Belorussian district would be the basis of a Front acting as a second-echelon force behind the Polish and Soviet-East German Fronts.

Rationale of New War Plan

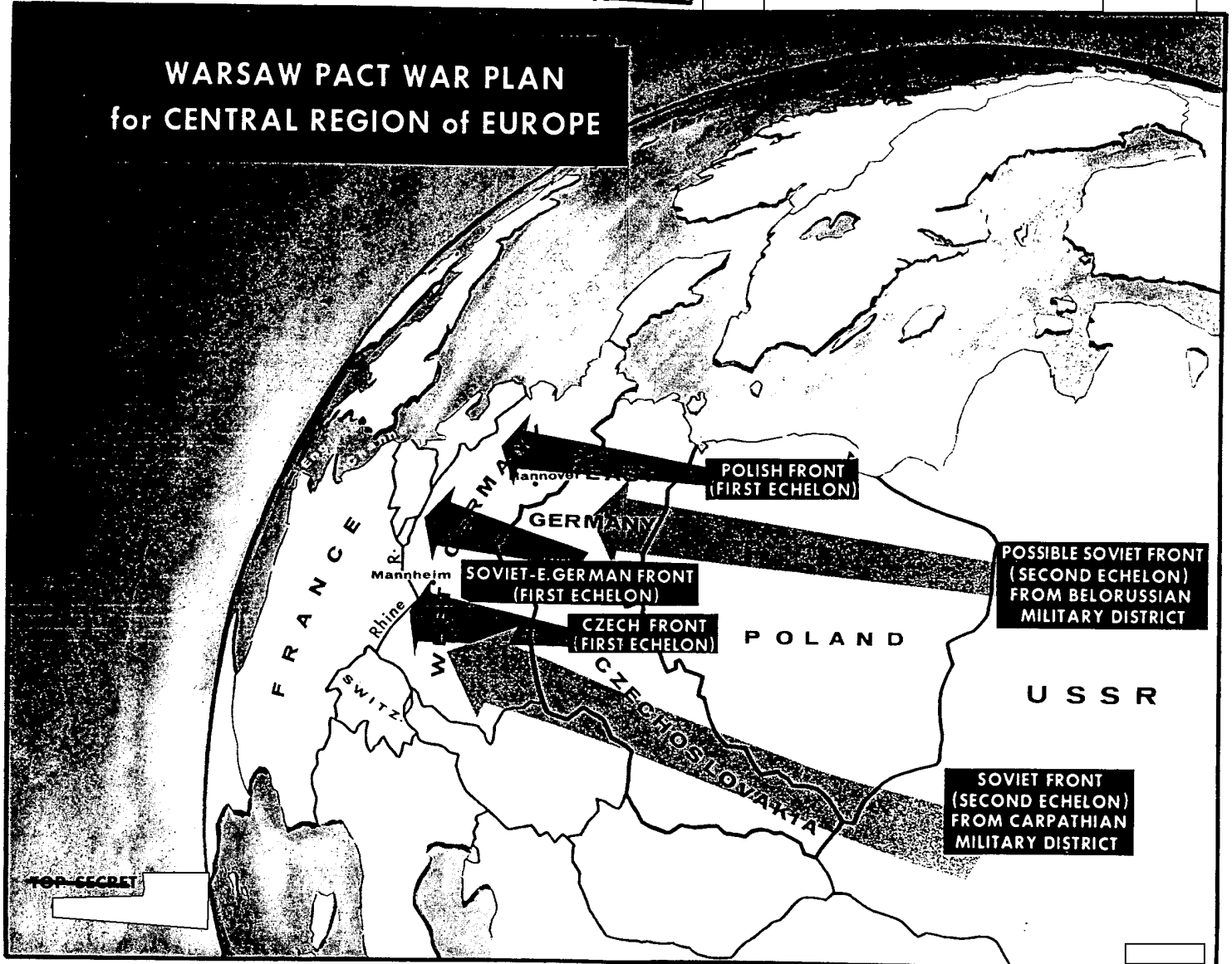
19. The Warsaw Pact contingency plan for the Central Region of Europe is clearly designed to achieve superiority in numbers rapidly, and to attain the strategic initiative from the outset of hostilities with NATO. It varies from earlier plans mainly in the national composition of the theater forces and the timing of reinforcement from the USSR.

20. Up to the early 1960's, the Warsaw Pact contingency plan apparently envisaged a theater of operations made up of three or four Soviet Fronts which would incorporate East European forces of division or army size. The old plan demanded a high level of combat readiness for the Soviet forces in the western USSR since these forces would have had to deploy into western Czechoslovakia and East Germany as first-echelon formations. The reduction in Soviet ground forces strength in the early 1960's probably made this plan infeasible and stimulated the concurrent improvements in the East European ground forces which would permit them to assume the greater responsibilities inherent in the new plan.

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WARSAW PACT WAR PLAN for CENTRAL REGION of EUROPE



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